

Appl. No.09/990,803
Amdt. Dated 11/17/2003
Reply to Office action of 08/21/2003

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

This Amendment is in response to the Office Action mailed August 21, 2003. In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-14, 19-32, and 37-50 under 35 U.S.C. § 102 and objected to claims 15-18, 33-36, and 51-54.

Claims 2-5, 13-15, 20-23, 31-33, 38-41, and 49-51 have been canceled without prejudice. Accordingly, claims 1, 6-12, 16-19, 24-30, 34-37, 42-48, and 52-54 are pending.

Applicant gratefully acknowledges that the Examiner indicated that claims 15, 33, and 51 are directed to allowable subject matter. Reconsideration in light of the amendments and remarks are made herein is respectfully requested.

Claim Objections

Applicant gratefully acknowledges the Examiner's indication that the dependent claims 15, 33, and 51 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claims and any intervening claims. Although Applicant respectfully disagrees with many of the Office Action's rejections, in order to expedite prosecution of the pending case, Applicant has generally rewritten objected to dependent claims 15, 33, and 51 as independent claims 1, 19, and 37, respectively, in order to gain allowance of these claims. Independent claims 1, 19, and 37 contain basically the same limitations as objected to claims 15, 33 and 51, respectively. Because the independent claims are generally rewritten versions of the objected claims in independent form with basically the same limitations and being generally of the same scope, respectively, they have not been narrowed within the meaning of *Festo*.

Therefore, Applicant respectfully submits that rewritten independent claims 1, 19, and 37 and their respective dependent claims, are now in condition for allowance. Accordingly pending claims 1, 6-12, 16-19, 24-30, 34-37, 42-48, and 52-54 are now in condition for allowance.

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Conclusion

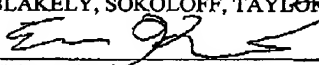
In view of the remarks made above, it is respectfully submitted that pending claims 1, 6-12, 16-19, 24-30, 34-37, 42-48, and 52-54 define the subject invention over the prior art of record. Thus, Applicant respectfully submits that all the pending claims are in condition for allowance, and such action is earnestly solicited at the earliest possible date. The Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is believed that such contact would further the examination of the present application. To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 02-2666 and please credit any excess fees to such account.

Respectfully submitted,

BLAKELY, SOKOLOFF, TAYLOR & ZAFMAN LLP

Dated: 11/14/2003

By


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11/14/2003

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